DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 935 JC 980 138

AUTHOR	Iwanaga, John
TITLE	Presidents and Trustees in Partnership. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, Los Angeles, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-JC-98-04
PUB DATE	1998-02-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	RR93002003
PUB TYPE	ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Evaluation; *Administrator Role; Board of Education Policy; *Board of Education Role; Boards of Education; *College Governing Councils; *College Presidents; Communication Skills; Community Colleges; Crisis Intervention; Governing Boards; Organizational Communication; Partnerships in Education; *Trustees; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This digest discusses the relationship between community college trustees and the president, focusing on the necessity of establishing a rapport before times of crises. It is vital that the roles of both parties be clearly defined, and that each has a mutual responsibility to inform the other in an emergency. The president should embody the principles of adaptability and sound personal judgment, and act as a spokesperson directing the communication and planning processes. Since communication is essential to maintaining a relationship, measures such as presidential evaluations and process improvement teams should be employed to facilitate dialogues between the two parties and foster competent trustee leadership. If this communication is characterized by trust and openness, an effective relationship between the board and president should develop--one that withstands, and even assuages, times of crises. (YKH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 416 935

ERIC Digest

Presidents and Trustees in Partnership

John Iwanaga

ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Cohen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

JC 980 138

ERIC ® Clearinghouse for Community Colleges

University of California at Los Angeles
3051 Moore Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521
(310) 825-3931

Digest

February 1998 EDO-JC-98-04

Presidents and Trustees in Partnership

by John Iwanaga

While much has been written about the roles of presidents and trustees in governing the nation's community colleges, comparatively little research has focused specifically on the relationship that ideally exists between them. This relationship is important to the successful operation of community colleges at all times, but is especially critical during times of change or crisis.

Weisman and Vaughan (1997) assert that developing an effective relationship between the board and the president depends on the honing of personal and professional skills by both parties in order to form a clear understanding of their job duties and expectations of their constituents. In a summary of the volume of *New Directions for Community Colleges* edited by Weisman and Vaughan, this Digest discusses the functions and professional needs of the community college governing board and presidency and offers suggestions on how to improve their relationship.

Clearly Defined Roles During Crises

Certainly most college leaders would agree that the responsibilities of both the president and board should be precisely delineated, well in advance of an impending crisis. Typically, there is an understanding that the role of the board is to create policy, while the president is primarily responsible for its execution. Especially important in a crisis situation is the existence of a clear plan for the dissemination of crisis information among campus constituencies and to the general public. Two researchers (Fanelli, 1997; Kenney, 1997) agree that the board and the president have a mutual responsibility to inform one another in a crisis; however, since the president is closer to the institution than the trustees, it is the president's responsibility to direct the communication and planning processes.

Once the board supports a position or plan regarding the crisis, the president can then inform the college community of the issue, describing the planned response and the board's support for the plan. The president usually serves as the spokesperson for the college; however in the event that the president is too close to the crisis to be effective, it is appropriate for the board chair to speak on behalf of the college.

Nurturing Board Flexibility

While interaction between president and board must be governed by clearly defined responsibilities in a crisis situation, this does not mean creating an inflexible or overly rigid relationship. Presidents, trustees, and key administrators cite the importance of establishing institutional processes and programs that help to maintain trust and open communication between board and president during times of change (Boggs and Smith, 1997; Davis, 1997; Nielsen and Newton; 1997.)

Davis also emphasizes that professional development programs for trustees can aid the new trustee in several important areas, such as:

- developing an appreciation of the college's context and history,
- inspiring curiosity about campus programs,
- encouraging effective group decision-making techniques,
- helping trustees to engage in careful analysis of issues,
- facilitating communication with key college constituencies, and
- developing an appreciation of strategic planning.

Presidential Leadership Strengths

Community college presidents can be encouraged to think of their work as requiring not only specific sets of skills, but also two essential qualities of strong leadership: adaptability and sound personal judgment. These two attributes, according to Pierce and Pederson (1997), can help community college presidents face a number of new challenges, such as the need to capitalize on innovations in technology, and cope with increasingly complex issues surrounding access and mission. Gaskin (1997) argues that new challenges, such as searching for alternative funding sources and maintaining an active role in the political and civic arenas, will help define community college leadership of the future.

Facilitating Communication Between President and Board

Other programs and processes that may facilitate effective communication between the president and board include presidential evaluations and process improvement teams (PIT). Nielsen and Newton (1997) point to presidential evaluations as a means for the board to communicate its expectations clearly to the president, and suggest six guidelines for designing an evaluation:

- Evaluation should enhance and strengthen presidential performance.
- The basis for evaluation should be a shared vision between the president and the board.
- Evaluations of the president also reflect the effectiveness of the board.
- Evaluation should be in writing and conducted separately from contract renewal and salary adjustments.
- Consistency is the key; a specific, thorough, and objective evaluation instrument with adequate room for discussion can minimize confusion.
- The board should never ask the staff to evaluate the president.

Boggs and Smith suggest that presidential and board evaluations be used to articulate expectations as well as to maintain objectivity in assessment, especially during board changes. Their research found that presidents who were successful in dealing with board changes made annual presidential objectives the basis for their evaluation and took the lead in developing a list of presidential objectives for board review.

According to Martin (1997), PIT concepts can aid communication and may facilitate effective trustee leadership if:

- The mission and goals of the team are clear.
- The roles and responsibilities of individual team members are understood.
- Regular meetings are scheduled and meeting times published.
- The team's process for arriving at decisions is clearly stated.
- Methods for obtaining feedback from customers are devised and used.
- Desirable communication practices are defined and then practiced.
- Data gathering is conducted using appropriate methodology and tools.
- The organization's definition and degree of empowerment is clearly stated.
- The team builds in an assessment component of its own activity.

Conclusion

Clear communication is the key to developing an effective relationship between the president and the board. The literature indicates that even in times of crisis when leaders operate under narrowly defined roles to interact with various constituents, they should maintain an open dialogue among themselves. This can best be achieved through establishing processes and programs that allow for a flexible relationship in which the president and the trustees can clearly articulate their expectations of one another and their goals for the college.

References

This Digest is drawn from *New Directions for Community Colleges*, Number 98, edited by Iris M. Weisman and George B. Vaughan, published in Summer 1997: "Presidents and Trustees in Partnership: New Roles and Leadership Challenges." The cited articles include, "When Boards Change: Presidential Response," by George R. Boggs and Cindra J. Smith; "Orientation and Professional Development of Trustees," by Gary Davis; "When a Crisis Occurs: A President's Perspective," by Sean A. Fanelli; "At the Millennium," by Fred Gaskin; "When a Crisis Occurs: A Trustee's Perspective," by Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney; "Opportunities and Challenges for Boards in Times of Change," by Montez C. Martin, Jr.; "Board-President Relations: A Foundation of Trust," by Norm Nielsen and Wayne Newton; and "The Community College Presidency: Qualities for Success," by David R. Pierce and Robert P. Pedersen.

The ERIC Clearinghouse is administered by the National Library of Education and operates under OERI Contract No. RR93002003. The opinions expressed in this Digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NLE/OERI and no official endorsement by NLE/OERI should be inferred.